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> ~~it is~~ a Plea for the Middle Classes by Rev. W. Woodard.

I MAGNIFY MINE OFFICE.

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF RIPON,

On Sunday, the 19th day of Sept., 1847,

AT THE

GENERAL ORDINATION OF THE LORD BISHOP OF RIPON.

BY

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SERMON.

ROMANS xi. 13.

“ I magnify mine office.”

IF we study the biography of a true poet, and enter into the recesses of his mind, we soon discover that Poetry was, in his estimation, the most sublime of all the pursuits of man, and, marvelling at his own productions, that he regarded them as in some measure the results of inspiration: he magnified his office, and unless he had done so he would have been a mere versifier, an accomplished man of literature but no Poet.

When we enter the studio of a distinguished artist, we find him surrounded by the portraits of artists eminent in their day, and when he refers to their history and points to the princes and peers, whom by sculpture or painting they have immortalized, and who, except for the artists whom they once proudly patronized, would have been long since forgotten, we perceive that the artist is conscious of the dignity of his calling, that he regards himself as the superior of those to whom he must now yield precedence, and that he magnifies his office. Unless he does so, and devotes all the energies of his mind to the study of his art, though he may by his talent procure a present livelihood, his will never be an immortality of fame.

When we converse with musicians, they so magnify their office in their own minds, that they confound with intellect itself, a just appreciation of musical sounds, and suppose that to the art of the performer and the science of music, all other arts and sciences must be rendered subservient.

It is indeed a part of man's nature to magnify to himself the importance of any pursuit in which he is engaged, and until he does so, he will neither devote to it the energies of his mind, nor labor with success. When we see ecclesiastics, though pledged to lay aside all other studies except those which bear upon the study of Theology, dedicating all their mental powers to the fascinating pursuits of literature or science; when we see others affecting a secularity of dress and deportment, hurried first into the follies of life, and through them involved in more grave offences of commission as well as omission, we may trace the lamentable fact not only to the existence of an unconverted heart, but to that other fact, that they have never viewed in a proper light the awful importance of those duties which, through their ordination, have devolved upon them. And therefore I conceive that, when called upon by our Spiritual Father to address those whom he is about to admit into the Sacred Ministry, I cannot select a more appropriate text than those few words which I have read to you, or address you with more probability of profit to your souls, than by entreating you now and at all periods of life, to reflect with seriousness, and deliberation, upon the magnitude, in its functions and in its responsibilities, of that office which is about to be imposed upon you, by the Laying on of Hands.

To dispense improvement and happiness through the social and domestic circles of a neighbourhood; to administer consolation in the house of mourning, to

supply spiritual succour and comfort in the chamber of the sick, to enforce the truths of eternity at the bed of the dying; to lead the Divine worship in the Services of God's House; to preach the truths of the everlasting Gospel from the pulpit; to admit the elect into the Church at Baptism; to prepare the baptized for the laying on of hands in Confirmation; to commemorate at the Lord's Table, the one full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction made upon the cross, by God Incarnate, and to offer up the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; to act as watchmen on the Lord's watch tower, and to watch for immortal souls; as shepherds under the Divine Pastor, to lead his sheep to the green pastures and the living waters, to seek the lost, to guide those that stray, to carry the weary, to cherish the wounded, and to feed the lambs, for whom He shed His own most precious blood; to act, not as ministers of an earthly Sovereign, an honor to which the ambitious aspire, but even as ambassadors of the King of kings, sent with tidings of mercy to a rebellious world; as stewards of the mysteries of God, servants in the household of the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, commissioned by Him to administer the Grace of His Sacraments to His spiritual children, and to bear the bread and water of life to hungry and thirsty souls, whom He invites to His Heavenly Banquet: yea, to act as the fellow helpers of Omnipotence in translating men from the bondage of sin and Satan, into the glorious liberty of the children of God, since under the present dispensation, the Almighty Lord God, sets limits, as it were, to His own omnipotence, and employs the agency of man; surely, my brethren, these are functions, and this an office, of the magnitude and importance of which it is impossible to speak in terms of exaggeration. In worldly avocations, a man may sometimes expose

himself to the ridicule of his associates, by a disproportionate magnification of his own pursuit; but this cannot be the case with us, for no calling can approach in importance to that which relates to the salvation and edification of immortal souls; nay, properly and sufficiently to magnify the importance of the ministerial office, in promoting the Glory of God, the Blessed Trinity would exhaust the eloquence of an Archangel's tongue.

But observe, my brethren, what is here asserted and maintained is this, that our OFFICE is to be magnified; a very different and entirely distinct thing, from the magnifying of self through the office—of confounding which, two different and distinct things, many a self deceiver is guilty; and against this we all require to be continually warned. Too many there are, who in the sacred ministry, seem scarcely able to make the distinction between what is an important duty, and what is always a folly and often a sin; who desire to promote what they should endeavour to avoid, deference to themselves personally, and who seek their own glory, while they speak of the Glory of God.

Very different was the conduct of St. Paul. "I magnify mine office," said the apostle to the Gentiles, when writing to the Romans, but why? Not for his own sake, not to conciliate respect or esteem to himself, not to obtain authority and power for the indulgence of human pride: "I am the least of the apostles," he was wont to say in speaking of himself, "that am not meet to be called an apostle," "less than the least of all saints:"* but "I magnify mine office," he says, "if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them."

* 1 Cor. xv. 9. Eph. iii. 8.

The advantage of others was his sole object, and whenever we magnify our office, let us remember that it is not to be for self-exaltation, but in order that we may discharge properly those duties to which we are appointed for the promotion of God's glory, through the salvation and edification of souls. When we really magnify our office, we shall, like St. Paul, humiliate self, and in self-humiliation the real education of the soul consists.

The distinction to which I have alluded, though hidden from the self-deceiver, is easily made and applied by the looker on. We may hear the dignified ecclesiastic, advanced in years, with pompous deportment, contending for precedence in society, and declaiming on what he calls the dignity of the cloth; or we may see the young ecclesiastic, affecting a peculiarity of dress, demeanour, and phraseology, and by his singularity of appearance attracting attention to himself; and we at once perceive that self, not the good of others, is in their thoughts, that though they seem to magnify their office, the real object is, through the office, to magnify self.

But although this be the case, yet it is only by magnifying their office, that young ecclesiastics will preserve a proper decorum and consistency of conduct, in their general intercourse with society. We sometimes hear discussions upon minute points of clerical propriety, and enquiry is made, whether this or that pursuit or amusement is to be regarded as clerical: but it is not by discussion of these details, it is by taking the general principle, by properly magnifying our office, that we shall be able to regulate our conduct as circumstances from time to time may arise. If we mistake our position in society, we fall into absurdities, whereas, by knowing precisely what it is, we have a rule which can seldom be misapplied.

It is sometimes asked why certain occupations and amusements which all admit to be lawful to the laity, are prohibited to the clergy, and it is asserted that what is allowable to one class of Christians, must be allowable to all who name the name of Christ. But there is a fallacy here, for we are never to forget that many things are lawful, which are nevertheless inexpedient to certain persons under certain circumstances. For example, who would think of blaming our children for being amused with their playthings? And yet we should be severe in our censures upon that person who, having arrived at man's estate, should refuse to put away childish things. Precisely so, there are modes of conduct and various kinds of recreation, in which there is nothing intrinsically wrong, and which are therefore allowable to those who have advanced from childhood to youth; but in which older men could not indulge, without depriving themselves of the respect which they might otherwise challenge, and of the reverence which is ever due to their grey hairs. But when a young man is ordained to the priesthood, he ceases, in the eye of the Church, to be ranked among the young men, and takes his place among the Elders of Israel;—he is called a presbyter or an elder on this account. Whatsoever, then, would be unbecoming in a Christian advanced in years, is, on this account, unbecoming in a presbyter or elder of the Church, and the actions, which would deprive grey hairs of their reverence, are to be carefully avoided by those to whom, though young in years, the designation of reverend is accorded. If it were possible, those only would have been admitted into the sacred ministry, who had grown old in the service of the Lord, and who, by reference to their own spiritual experience, would have been able to form a right judgment in all things, and to bear rule wisely in

the Sanctuary. But since that could not be, and because moreover by study, meditation, and prayer, through the grace of God, younger men may obtain what may correspond to the experience which gives weight and authority to old age; young men have, from apostolic times, been received into holy orders: let those who are so admitted into the sacred ministry, magnify their office as presbyters, let them take their place among reverend and aged Christians, and never forget that they have been selected from their brethren of the same age as themselves, because they are presented to the Bishop as being "sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience."

When we pass from the consideration of our general conduct in society, to our demeanour in the sanctuary, it becomes still more important that we should magnify our office to our own minds. But here again I must allude to the distinction to which I have already called your attention. When a man, in conducting the services of the sanctuary, and in leading the devotions of the people, is in any way affected; if he reads in a pompous mouthing manner, or if, which is quite as offensive, he is affectedly simple; if he assumes a solemnity of tone which does not appear to be the natural expression of real feeling; if he seems to be thinking of the impression likely to be made on the assembled congregation, by his fine reading, or on the other hand by his hurried enunciation, adopted as an indirect testimony against the opposite extreme—the suspicion in the mind of the looker on is, that this man is magnifying not his office, but himself, that he is seeking not God's glory, but his own. It is by really magnifying our office, that carelessness, irreverence, and affectation are to be avoided. Let us never forget the dignity of the office with which we are

invested, when, acting as the mouthpiece of our people, we lead their devotions, and present their offerings unto the Lord. How overpowering are our feelings, what thrilling emotions stir the heart when we contemplate ourselves, in the benedictions and the absolutions, as acting in the character of ambassadors from Jehovah, to speak peace in His name to His penitent people ; or when we contemplate ourselves as stewards of the mysteries of God, dispensing His grace, through His sacraments. It is from a realization of these details of faith, that solemnity of thought and feeling result, giving a sufficient solemnity of manner, as much as is accordant with our natural temperament, and whatever is contrary to our natural temperament is mere acting.

When we thus magnify our office, we humiliate self, for when our thoughts advert to self, what are we even in the discharge of these most solemn functions ? All the good is done by the Lord God Himself, we are but as machines through whom the Holy Spirit operates ; of no more value in the work, than the water which is in the font, or the bread and wine upon the holy table, which, though used as the channels through which God conveys certain kinds of grace, to souls in which no impediment to such grace exists, are in themselves nothing ; in our ministrations we are, at best, but as the sunbeams which God employs to bear to earth His heat, or as the rains and dews which carry His fertilizing blessing : it is in weakness and fear and much trembling, that we must be among our people, never forgetting, that he who opens a gate to others may not be permitted to pass through it himself, yea, that he who has preached to others, may himself be a castaway.

And this brings me to offer a few remarks on our office as preachers. Here again, when the office of a

preacher is extolled by one who evidently seeks, by the delivery of fine sentiments in fine language, to raise adulation of himself, who, by polished periods and the flourishes of rhetoric, profanes the pulpit, by making it a theatre of display, or the rostrum in which he may obtain for himself the fame of an orator, we feel, that while he magnifies his office, it is only because with that office he is himself connected, and that he is puffed up in his fleshly mind, because by that mind his office is not magnified properly. But still we must be on our guard against falling into the opposite extreme, and of following one truth to the exclusion of another. Wrong it certainly is, so to magnify the ordinance of preaching as to cause it to supersede in the estimation of men, the sacraments of the Gospel; and yet in maintaining the dignity of the sacraments and other ordinances of the sanctuary, there may be sometimes detected an indirect mode of magnifying self, since a man may depreciate the ordinance of preaching from a consciousness of his own incapacity for the office of a preacher. But he who magnifies his office properly, and looks to God, not himself, believes that there is in preaching a kind of sacramental efficacy, which ought not to be overlooked. Even as God the Holy Ghost, the Real Minister in the Church of Christ, employs water and the word in the regeneration, and bread and wine in the strengthening and refreshing of souls, so does He employ the voice of man for the conversion of sinners and for the edification of the faithful. The voice of a sinful man is heard, but using the human voice, it is God the Holy Ghost Who speaks to the heart prepared to hear.

My brethren of the ministry, it is when we thus regard ourselves as outward and visible instruments in the hands of God, through whom the conversion of

sinners is ordinarily effected by God the Holy Ghost, that we become duly impressed with the solemn and sacred character of the preacher's office; and in this faith, it is not on our talents that we are to rely, for the work of conversion is the work, not of man, but of God, Who sometimes converts the sinner's heart, through the strong appeal of those who are animated in their address and powerful in their language; and at other times, through the grave remonstrances, or the earnest reasonings of others, who are not quickly moved or easily excited; 'not by might of words, not by power of eloquence, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord.' Only, my brethren, let us constantly have in mind, that this is to be with us an object, and as you advance in the ministry, you will be astonished to find, through conversation with penitents, how words and sayings, so little intended to have any particular effect, as to have been forgotten by yourself, have, through the Spirit, done their work on a sinner's heart: and oh! may the converting Spirit ever be with us, whispering to our own souls, while we preach to others,—Physician, heal thyself.

But preachers only magnify their office partially, when they think merely of conversion, and indolently confine their addresses to an appeal to the feelings: the preacher is also appointed to be the instructor of God's people, to edify the faithful, by building them up in sound doctrine. The mind is to be employed as well as the soul sanctified, in the service of God, to Whom the whole man, spirit, soul, and body, is to be devoted. Hence, no doubt, in order that it may give employment to all classes of mind, there are permitted to be difficulties in Scripture, depths for the giant to wade, as well as shallows which an infant may ford; in the study of Scripture, a Newton as well as a peasant will find enough to call into play all the

powers of his intellect; for in studying the Word of God he is conversing with the Infinite. The laity, engaged in their various avocations, are seldom able to make theology their exclusive study, but the clergy are endowed that to this one subject they may address all the energies of the mind, and they are under a vow that, laying aside the study of the world and the flesh, they will be "diligent in prayers, and in reading of the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same." It is our business, our duty, our especial calling, to give ourselves constantly to these studies, and to lay the result of them before those who have less time for the investigation; remembering that, as we profess to be teachers in the Church, we act dishonestly if we place before our hearers our own crude conjectures, on points upon which the Church has decided, or upon doctrines defined by her. The laity of the Church have a right to demand of their preachers, that they should state to them distinctly what the Church asserts, and prove to them from Scripture, that what the Church asserts is scriptural. If we suppose, (but it can only be by the supposition of ignorance,) that the doctrinal positions of the Church of England are unscriptural, it were dishonest in us to teach other doctrine in her pulpits: we ought rather to cease from teaching at all, or to quit her communion.

In this department of a preacher's office, we are appointed to make plain the truths which we have realized to our own minds, to minds less acquainted with the depths of theology; to reduce the folios of the learned to the shape which may more easily be grasped by the busy; to take the precious stones from the quarry, and to polish them, so that their value may be apparent to the passer by; to act like Joseph, who gathered all the wheat into his storehouse, in order

to deal it out to the people, in retail, as their exigencies demanded ; to draw water from the deep wells, and to distribute it cup by cup, to the people thirsting for the waters of life ; to go as the parent bird to the full corn field, and thence to bring grain after grain to the little ones in the nest, in such proportions as can be by them digested.

Thus, my brethren, are we pledged to be students through life ; to be ever learning, that we may always be more apt to teach ; ever taking in that we may give out : ever keeping our own minds awake, that the minds of our people may not be in a lethargy. It is impossible to give to others what we do not possess ourselves, or to instruct others in theology, if we are not ourselves theologians. We cannot give out water from an empty bucket.* It is lamentable, indeed, to find

* We live at a period when Christianity is, if we may say so, in fashion among the respectable classes of society, when the Gibbons of the age go to church, call themselves Christians, and speak favourably, not only of the morality, but of the sentiments of Christianity. They are only opposed to its doctrines, the dogmas of the Church ; an allusion to some of the doctrines is tolerated, because these doctrines are conventionally explained away, and are the form under which religious sentiment is recommended ; but any thing like an allusion to the mysterious truths of our faith is regarded with suspicion, and an outcry is raised against those who assert them as a reality, instead of using them as a kind of literary ornament. It has on this ground been recommended to preachers, to avoid the study of theology, and to confine themselves to moral or sentimental preaching, such as even Socinians of liberal mind could tolerate. But the wisdom of such advice savours of mere worldly prudence. Whatever God in His wisdom has revealed, that ought the preacher of the word to know and to expound, or he makes man wiser than God. At the present time, the theologian is attacked by those who are ignorant of theology, and denounced for asserting novelties, when he only propounds what all theologians hold. To promote peace without the sacrifice of truth, it is desirable that the study of theology, instead of being restricted, should be enlarged.

some of the clergy remaining, all their lives, contented with the elementary information which their Bishop requires, as the minimum of theology, before he will admit them into the ministry; and it is still more lamentable to find them supposing that they know the whole counsel of God, when they have mastered a few of what they think to be the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, forgetting that fundamental doctrines are not correctly stated when placed before us in an isolated form; they are to be understood in their relation to other revealed truths, and we are expressly directed to "prophecy according to the proportion of faith." It has been well said that "there are many persons who err so much the more dangerously, because they take a truth as the principle of their error. Their fault is not that they follow a falsehood, but that they follow one truth to the exclusion of another. There are a number of truths, both doctrinal and moral, which appear repugnant and contrary, but which nevertheless subsist in an admirable order. The source of all heresies is the exclusion of some of these truths. Hence it appears that the shortest way to prevent heresies, is to instruct in all the truths of religion, and the shortest way of refuting heresies, is to declare all these truths."*

There is one general rule to be laid down with respect to sermons, the observance of which will save the preacher much unnecessary care and trouble; namely, to think only of the exigencies of the people whom he addresses, without any regard to his own character, as a man either of literature or of eloquence. The position of our mind in preparing a sermon, ought to be, not that of a literary man making a composition, but rather that of a friend writing to a friend, because he has something to say, and not, as

* Pascal.

in a formal letter, because he must say something. Our sermon should be regarded as an hebdomadal letter to our flock; and a good sermon is not that which a critic would pronounce to be such, but that which is best adapted in matter and in style, to the capacities of the congregation we address. The Theologian full of matter, and acquainted with his congregation, being regardless of his style, and thinking only of expressing himself plainly, finds no difficulty in this part of his duty, for out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. Neither will he who looks to the good of his flock, refuse, after the lapse of some time, to repeat his sermons; he will rather feel that by taking an old sermon, and by adding to it the illustrations and elucidations with which longer study has provided him, he will by his revised sermon, indicate both his own advancement and that of his people, while at the end of his life, in sermons thus frequently revised, he may leave a legacy to the Church at large.

When we magnify our office as the converters of the sinful, and the edifiers of the faithful, and look with a single eye to their advantage, and not to our own literary character, we may be sure that we shall have in all we do, the assistance of the Holy Ghost, and our labor will be comparatively light.

And now let us apply this principle, "I magnify mine office," to our parochial duties.

It is very true, that when we see the Parish Priest assuming a dictatorial tone, refusing the assistance and advice of the more experienced of his parishioners, and jealously watching all the prerogatives of his office, we are apt to suspect him of the fault to which we have alluded, and to suppose that it is self which he seeks to exalt, while it is his office which in words he magnifies: but at the same time we must perceive

that unless those who are placed in the less important cures, magnify their office very highly, they will either become indolent, or if their minds be energetic, they will be eagerly looking out for some more extensive sphere of operation. He on the contrary who magnifies his office, feels that wherever he is placed, he has to watch for immortal souls, to win men to Christ, and to carry on a warfare with satan and his angels, with wicked men and wicked spirits; and he also bears it in mind, that from the day of our ordination, our whole time to the hour of our death, is to be devoted to God's service; relaxation and recreation, being only allowable, in order that we may renew our physical strength, or reinvigorate our minds, so that we may gird ourselves the more vigorously for what we have to do. When the Parish is unusually small, still our time belongs to God, and what is not absolutely required for the visitation of the sick, for admonishing the wayward, for comforting the sorrowful, for superintending the school, and for study and prayer, should be placed at the disposal of the Bishop, to assist him in the conduct of Diocesan Institutions, established for the promotion of true religion and virtue. The layman gives his wealth, the Ecclesiastic his time, to the promotion of God's Glory, and before we venture to declaim against our brethren of the Laity, for not contributing large sums to Parochial purposes, we ought to be sure that to those purposes we devote our time exclusively or sufficiently.

What is an incentive to action with regard to those who are placed in smaller cures, affords consolation to such as are called to more extensive spheres of action. Not *less* than all their time is required of the former, not *more* than all their time can be given by the latter: and when, having given all our time to our work, we find, as in large Parishes we must do, that much

is left undone, which ought to have been done, but which it was impossible to do, we may then rest satisfied with the conviction, that our necessary deficiencies will have been in some way or other supplied by Him, Who though He employs human agency, does not stand in need of man's help to accomplish what He wills to be done. All that in large parishes we can do, is to be always ready for action: to commit our parish, each day as it comes, to the special protection of God, beseeching Him to direct our steps to the persons and places to whom and in which we can minister in any way to the promotion of His glory; and then each summons to the bed of sickness, or to the house of mourning, or to spiritual conference with a penitent, must be regarded as a special call, to obey which we must be prepared to forego personal ease, domestic enjoyment, and social intercourse.

There is one great error into which persons so situated are apt to fall, and that is, an undue appreciation of their own usefulness, which leads to a forgetfulness of the fact, that all, howsoever employed, are only instruments in God's hands, and that it is not always by those who are ostensibly employed that God's work is best done. The question to be asked is, not how can I make myself most useful? but, what is my duty under given circumstances? When men look to their usefulness they are inclined to be discontented, and to become anxious, as the phrase is, to extend their sphere of usefulness: they are sometimes afraid to do right lest wrong motives should be imputed to them, and their usefulness be thus destroyed; and the fear again of having their usefulness interfered with, makes them, when their characters are assailed, too vehement in their self-vindication. And after all, when we come calmly to consider the subject, what is the desire of extending one's sphere of usefulness but

ambition under another name, veiled from the self-deceiver's sight, because ambition is a deadly sin? and when we are deterred from doing what is right for fear of the imputation of a wrong motive, or when we are over vehement in self-vindication, may we not detect an undue regard, not to our office but to self? Does not this whole notion of our usefulness originate in a misconception?

God doth not need

Man's works or his own gifts ; who best
 Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best : his state
 Is kingly ; thousands at his bidding speed,
 And post o'er land and ocean, without rest ;
 They also serve who only stand and wait.

Yes, when a king or a general goes forth upon a campaign, the officers and soldiers follow him, desirous certainly of being useful, but not intending to decide for themselves how they will be most usefully employed ; they leave that to the wisdom and decision of their commander, who orders them to their respective posts as he thinks fit ; which posts of duty they continue to occupy, not because they see the usefulness of it, but because such has been the order they have received. Some are commanded to engage actively with the enemy, others form a corps of reserve, to some the custody of the baggage is confided ; others occupy some obscure post in the field merely watching the enemy. Now these are not permitted to leave their post because they desire to extend their sphere of usefulness, neither are the others permitted to retire because they are weary : all remain either fighting or watching until the battle is won, and then, but not till then the wisdom of the victorious general in his arrangements is fully perceived and duly appreciated.

Now we, my brethren, if we really believe in a par-

ticular Providence ; if we believe that the providence of God extends from the mightiest to the lowliest of things, from wielding the destinies of the universe to the clothing of the lily of the field, and to the protection even of the worm which crawls upon the dust ; we must of course believe that it is not by chance, for there is no such thing as chance, but by divine appointment that to each one of us is assigned that particular post in the armies of the living God, which we find ourselves to be occupying at the present moment. There shall we contentedly abide, doing the work our hand findeth to do, be it much or little, whether it consist in disputing with learned infidels, or in instructing the illiterate and perverse, whether it be in active pursuits, or in diligent study, there we shall abide until by a combination of circumstances concurring with a movement of the Spirit within us, and indicating the divine will, we feel it to be clear that we have a call elsewhere. Instead of complaining of the adverse circumstances by which we are surrounded we shall patiently adapt ourselves to the circumstances provided for us by God, or rather we shall lend to circumstances a voice, and hear them say, Thus saith the Lord. It may be that we cannot discover the use of being in any one particular spot more than another ; it may be that we desire some other kind of employment ; it may be that we see no fruit from our labour ; it may be that to all appearance we have preached in vain ; it may be that all our endeavours to promote the welfare spiritual and temporal of our people may have been frustrated ; yet if, having been always ready to do our Master's work in the sphere of action appointed by Him, we shall after long years of patient watchfulness and care, appear in the next world, with a proud heart humbled, and an insolent temper subdued, and there find that we have been an

instrument in the hands of God for the conversion of but one poor sinner's soul, to rescue but one fellow-creature from the grasp of satan, knowing the value of an immortal soul, we shall find ourselves amply repaid for all our long watching, and we shall remember with a holy accession of joy the words of the Holy Ghost, "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."*

It is one of the advantages of having daily service, when practicable, in our Churches, that it is an incessant memento to us of the fact that the good we hope to see effected in our parishes is done by God, and that we are only instruments in His hands: that while we preach or teach in our schools, or visit the sick, or attend to our other duties, He it is Who, through our instrumentality, which He uses but does not need, converts the souls of men. Besides praying as individuals, we have family prayers for blessings on the family in its corporate capacity; for a blessing on the diocese and the labours of the diocesan, the morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and praise is daily offered in our cathedral Churches, and so important is this considered by the Church, that actually certain of our brethren are set apart to give their time and attendance to this very thing; and feeling that without the same blessing the watchman waketh but in vain, and that it is but lost labour that we rise up early and so late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness, we are directed, when practicable, which very often it is not, to have parochial services day by day; and though it may be that out of a busy population only two or three, and those aged, infirm, and incapacitated for other duties, can attend, we are to remember, that to pray earnestly is the same thing as to labour, and

* James v. 30.

that therefore, those few, the maimed, the halt, the blind, when praying, Thy kingdom come, are helping the good cause, though less perceptibly, yet as really, as the most busy and the most energetic labourer in the Lord's vineyard. They too are labourers, only in another part of the field. They man the walls while others are fighting in the plain.

And now finally, my brethren, let me observe that we shall never go far wrong, if while we magnify our office we magnify also our responsibilities, and never forget the solemn account we shall one day have to give before the tribunal of Christ our God.

This question is certainly perplexing when we come to enquire how far the ill conduct of one man can be prejudicial to the eternal welfare of another, and would be even more perplexing if we were not daily conversant with the fact of children involved in misery and crime, through parental wickedness or neglect. But perplexing as it is, the difficulty is decreased when we reflect upon the omniscience of God. He knows what means of improvement, or of extricating himself from evil, have been placed in each man's way; He can therefore make the needful allowances, and will accept of less advancement in one person than in another; wherefore He commands us not to judge or to compare ourselves with others, but He requires us each to do our best, for He also knows when any persons have not made sufficient advancement under advantages conferred, and may see fit to remove from such, or to decrease the means and opportunities they once possessed, or which are vouchsafed to others. He may on these grounds see fit to inflict a punishment upon a parish or district by permitting the appointment of a wicked or a careless pastor. And well would it be for those of the laity complaining of the vice or the carelessness of him who

is sent to minister among them, while bearing witness against him to their bishop, and adopting all lawful means for his removal, not to confine their reproaches to him, but to look also to themselves, and to ascertain by self-examination whether they, by not making use of other means of improvement within their reach, have not been cursed by a bad clergyman as a punishment. If they believe that all things are ordered in His church by the providence of God, they will understand how He may punish by a bad pastor as well as bless by a good one; and let the individuals of a parish, by encouraging piety in themselves, and by the eloquence of a good example preaching piety to others, when the watchman is blind or ignorant, or as a dumb dog that cannot bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber,—let them by the rhetoric of a holy life reform their parish, and God in His good time will send them a good pastor as their reward.

But how awful is the thought that one ordained to be a blessing to God's people, may become only a rod of vengeance in the mighty hand and the outstretched arm of Jehovah; that wicked ministers in the Church may still be employed by God, but only in the sense in which Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar were employed, only as Satan was employed when he was permitted to torment Job, to try the patience of the faithful, or to be a curse to the wicked: "O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction."*

What agonies will rend, what horrors will overwhelm the heart of the blind, the ignorant, the dumb, the sensual, the gluttonous, the slumbering or careless pastor, when on the great day of account he shall see before the throne of Judgment some miserable sinner,

* Habakkuk i. 12.

and hear him say : There stands the watchman who was pledged to watch for my soul, I was wicked but he never warned me, I was a backslider but he never admonished me, I was ignorant but he never instructed me, I was a wanderer but he never tried to reclaim me : nay rather in all my evil ways he by his own evil example confirmed me.

It will be no consolation to such a one to hear the most just Judge say to his accuser : "Thou wicked servant, it is true that thou hadst not the advantage of a good pastor ; it is true that by the neglect of a wicked pastor many means of conversion and improvement were closed to thee, but there were other means by which thou mightest have been converted if thou hadst not hardened thine heart." It will be no consolation to hear this asserted, when the Judge shall turn round to the wicked pastor and say, "Son of man, whom I made a watchman to the house of Israel, although this wicked man shall die in his sins, yet because thou didst not warn him, his blood will I require at thine hand."

Alas ! my brethren, when we magnify or place before ourselves, in their fulness, the responsibilities of those who are appointed watchmen to the spiritual Israel of God, the most faithful minister must feel inclined to despond and say, "Who is sufficient for these things ?" Who, indeed ! if we did not hear Jesus, our almighty Saviour saying unto us, "Lo I am with you even unto the end of the world !" if we did not hear Jesus saying unto us, "My strength is made perfect in weakness ;" "My grace is sufficient for you !" if we did not know and believe that when there is an honest intention, in a heart justified by faith, to do our appointed work, then, "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins."

To Christ, Christ crucified, Christ glorified, Christ our atonement, Christ our intercessor, Christ sanctifying us by His Spirit, to Christ our all in all, we call men by our preaching; to effect a union with Him, the only Mediator, we administer the Sacraments; through Him, our only Intercessor, we offer our prayers and praises to the throne of grace; and on Him, our own, our adorable Jesus, to Whose service we devote our lives, we, the ministers of His Word and Sacraments, may with grateful confidence rely, in all the doubts and distresses, the dangers and conflicts of our ministerial life. Let us go forth, then, in the strength of the Lord, and making mention of His righteousness only, may we do great things,—and when the great day shall have come, may we each of us be able to say with cheerful voice, strong in the grace of Christ, Lo, here am I, and the children which Thou hast given me; and may we hear our own Saviour say unto us, Well done, good and faithful servant, take thy place among those who having turned many to righteousness are shining as the brightness of the firmament, even as the stars for ever and ever;—for while we magnify our responsibilities, we may magnify also the glory of our crown.







